

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7554

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XF, IS, EG, US

SUBJ: DEBATE OVER INTERIM AGREEMENT: THE PASSES AND

OILFIELDS VS US/ISRAEL RELATIONS

SUMMARY: IN LAST FEW WEEKS, DEBATE BETWEEN PROONENTS AND
OPPONENTS OF INTERIM GOE/GOI AGREEMENT HAS FOCUSED ON RELATIVE
IMPORTANCE OF PASSES AND OILFIELDS ON ONE HAND AND ISRAEL/US
RELATION ON THE OTHER. FORMER HAVE HELD THAT PRIMARY INTEREST
OF ISRAEL IS MAINTENANCE OF CLOSE AND EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH
USG EVEN AT PRICE OF ACCEDING TO LESS THAN IDEAL TERMS. OPPOSITION
CAMP HAS STRESSED MILITARY IMPORTANCE OF PASSES AND ECONOMIC
VALUE OF ABU RODEIS. EGYPTIAN DECISION RE UNEF JIDDA
RESOLUTION RE ISRAELI SUSPENSION FROM UNGA AND FUROR
OVER HAWKS FOR JORDAN ARE NEW FACTORS IN EQUATION, AND IT
IS TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THEIR FULL IMPACT ON DEBATE. PRELIMINARY
INDICATIONS ARE THAT THESE DEVELOPMENTS--PARTICULARLY HAWKS--
WILL STRENGTHEN GOI DESIRE FOR US-ISRAELI
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"COORDINATION OF POLICIES" IN CONTEXT NEW AGREEMENT WITH

EGYPT. END SUMMARY.

1. DEBATE OVER INTERIM AGREEMENT HAS HIGHLIGHTED CONTINUING SPLIT BETWEEN TWO POINTS OF VIEW (OVERLAPPING SOME PARTY LINES) --PROMPONENTS WILLING TO SEE GOI MAKE SOME FURTHER CONCESSIONS ON RECIPROCAL BASIS AND OPPONENTS WHO BELIEVE GOI ALREADY HAS GONE TOO FAR. IN GENERAL, THERE HAVE BEEN FEW SURPRISES REGARDING AFFILIATION WITH THESE VIEWPOINTS, WITH LARGE PART OF LABOR PARTY TOGETHER WITH MAPAM AND INDEPENDENT LIBERALS IN FORMER GROUP AND RAFI, NRP YOUTH FACTION AND LIKUD IN OPPOSITION. AMONG EXCEPTIONS HAS BEEN LIKUD MEMBER (NOT MK) FORMER AIR FORCE COMMANDER EZER WEIZMAN AND PERHAPS TO LESSER EXTENT AHARON YARIV, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE COME OUT STRONGLY FOR AGREEMENT.

2. INTENSITY OF SENTIMENT WHICH HAS DEVELOPED, AND NOT ONLY IN OPPOSITION CAMP, UNDERSCORES PERSISTENCE OF CERTAIN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS TRANSCENDING DIRECT ISSUES OF NEGOTIATIONS: BASIC DISTRUST OF ARAB INTENTIONS, RESENTMENT AT WHAT IS WIDELY PERCEIVED AS ONE-SIDED US PRESSURE, AND FATALISM IN SOME QUARTERS ABOUT VIRTUAL INEVITABILITY OF ANOTHER WAR. FAHMI'S JULY 15 ANNOUNCEMENT RE UNEF MANDATE AND EGYPTIAN SUPPORT FOR JIDDA DECISION TO SEEK SUSPENSION OF ISRAEL FROM UNGA HAVE ONLY REINFORCED ISRAELI SUSPICIONS. ADDED TO THIS IS COMPLEX INTERPLAY OF PERSONAL, FACTIONAL AND PARTY RIVALRIES, WITH BOTH MODERATES AND HARDLINERS PAYING AS MUCH ATTENTION TO DOMESTIC POLITICS AS TO INTERNATIONAL OR MILITARY/ ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS.

3. AT RABIN'S REQUEST, MINISTERS ARE NOT DISCUSSING PUBLICLY THEIR VIEWS PENDING FINAL CABINET DECISION. INDEED, THEY APPEAR TO BE MAKING CONSCIOUS EFFORT NOT TO IMPEDE RABIN'S ATTEMPT TO GET BEST POSSIBLE DEAL. EVEN "DOVISH" MAPAM/ILP MINISTERS REPORTEDLY BELIEVE ISRAEL SHOULD HOLD TO FIRM NEGOTIATING POSTURE, WITH CAVEAT THAT FINAL OUTCOME SHOULD BE POSITIVE. DEBATE HAS BEEN GOING ON, INSTEAD, IN PUBLIC SECTOR.

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4. PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS NOW USED BY PROONENTS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: A) US/ISRAEL RELATIONS ARE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE (AS EBAN PUT IT, "PASSES" IN FRONT OF WHITE HOUSE AND CAPITOL ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN GIDI AND MITLA); B) COLLAPSE OF NEGOTIATIONS WOULD DEEPEN RIFT WITH USG AND CONFRONT ISRAEL WITH OPTION OF GOING TO GENEVA ALONE; C) STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH REMAINS ONLY REALISTIC OPTION FOR REDUCING TENSION; D) ISRAEL HAS INTRINSIC INTEREST IN

GAINING TIME FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND STRENGTHENING OF IDF; AND E) PASSES ARE OF LIMITED MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE. OF PARTICULAR NOT IS ARGUMENT, ATTRIBUTED BY MAARIV COMMENTATOR TO RABIN, THAT SHOWDOWN WITH US OVER APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS IS UNAVOIDABLE, BUT IT IS NOT IN ISRAEL'S INTEREST THAT IT OCCUR AT THIS TIME AND OVER THESE ISSUES.

5. COUNTER ARGUMENTS OF OPPOSITION EMPHASIZE DEFENSE OF VITAL SECURITY INTERESTS, RESISTANCE ON PRINCIPLE TO US PRESSURE, AND PREDICTIONS THAT SINAI CONCESSIONS NOW PRESAGE ARAB/US DEMANDS FOR CONCESSIONS ON GOLAN HEIGHTS AND WEST BANK LATER ON. OPPONENTS WANT RABIN TO STICK TO HIS FEBRUARY 12 KNESSET STATEMENT RE NO WITHDRAWAL IN ABSENCE OF NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION. DAYAN, IN MORE SOPHISTICATED VARIANT, HAS URGED GOI TO PROPOSE PARALLEL NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT AND SYRIA, OFFERING DEEP WITHDRAWAL IN SINAI AND NEW LINE OF GOLAND FOR NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION. OPPOSITION ALSO ARGUES THAT, SINCE NEGOTIATIONS ARE LIKELY TO BREAK DOWN AT SOME POINT AND THIS COULD WELL LEAD TO RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES, IT IS BETTER TO TAKE THAT RISK AT PESENT TIME AND FROM PRESENT POSITIONS RATHER THAN FEW YEARS FROM NOW FROM LESS ADVANTAGEOUS POSITIONS. IT ALSO DOWNPLAYS IMPLICATIONS OF POSSIBLE RIFT WITH US OR HOLDS THAT CONFRONTATION- WHICH MANY VIEW AS INEVITABLE IN ANY CASE-SHOULD COME NOW RATHER THAN LATER ON.

6. THE PARTICULAR CONTENT OF THIS DEBATE ABOUT AN INTERIM AGREEMENT INEVITABLY REFLECTS THE CURRENT SITUATION-E.G., FAHMI'S STATEMENT ON UNEF, US POVISON OF HAWKS FOR JORDAN, AND JIDDA DECISION ARE NOW IN THE FOREFRONT OF ISRAELI POLITICAL CONCERNs. WHILE BASIC ORIENTATION OF MOST ISRAELI POLITICIANS IS RATHER FIXED,
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AND LIKELY TO REMAIN SO FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE, BOTH THEMES AND EMPHASIS OF DEBATE MAYCHANGE AS NEGOTIATING PROCESS CONTINUES. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST FROM US VIEWPOINT WILL BE ATTITUDE OF POTENTIAL FENCESITTERS, PARTICULARLY SOME ELEMENTS OF RAFI FACTION OF LABOR PARTY AND NRP, AS TERMS OF AGREEMENT BECOME CRYSTALLIZED.

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